

James T. Jeremiah
Baptist Distinctives, Part 3
December 3, 1981

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Thank you, Steve. I am glad for the opportunity sharing the platform this morning with a man dressed in red. It seems to me, however that things must be getting tough in the north pole looks like he's lost a lot weight. If it could be noised abroad among some of my Baptist brethren that I was on the same program at the same day with Santa Claus, I would undoubtedly receive several letters. But I'm leaving town and I don't have to answer them. Open your Bibles please, to the book of Acts again. And I believe that the points we've tried to emphasize are found in this second chapter of Acts.

James T. Jeremiah:

First of all, in verse 41, chapter two, it has somewhat to say about the word of God. They gladly received his word. We've sought to emphasize the authority of scripture as one of the great Baptist distinctives. Then it speaks also in that passage of scripture that they that gladly received his word were baptized. There were those who heard the word, preached by Peter in the very beginning of the church, there was an emphasis upon gospel preaching and evangelism, which is another emphasis upon the distinctive that we believe Baptists have believed and fought for through the years. Then the word of God says, "There were added unto them about 3000 souls." Which is very strong evidence, that there was a group of people that composed in early days, a local church.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now this morning, we want to finish the two points on tulip that we haven't yet dealt with. The baptism believers, or as that fits into the point, the immersion believers, and last of all, the priesthood of the saints. I never stand in this chapel to preach without being reminded of something I heard many, many years ago when I was a young student preparing for the ministry and the teacher stood up in that class and said, "Whenever you young men get out into the ministry and you stand up to preach and your knees do not knock against each other, get down on them. You ought to.

James T. Jeremiah:

You cannot imagine the responsibility that one will feel when you try to present something, you feel God wants you to say and pray that God will use it in every one of our lives. It's a tremendous responsibility. And I know you've been praying for us. Thank you also for remembering us as we go on the journey beginning, we hope tomorrow. And somebody asked me if I was going out there for vacation. That was a nice thought. I hope someday to make a brief trip to Tijuana, see what that's like, 15 miles away, but we have a schedule and we're glad for the opportunities. We'll be visiting several of the schools. I think I'm going to have an opportunity to visit Los Angeles speaking for three weeks at Christian Heritage College. We're going to Western Baptist Bible College before we come back. And on the way home, we are going to stop at Faith Baptist Bible college.

James T. Jeremiah:

We'll be making the journey of the schools. And that's a great, great experience for us. Now this morning, as we think about these two points that are vital to Bible believing Baptists, let's think about this matter of baptism. We live in a day when there are many people who say it doesn't make a whole lot of difference about baptism. If you have been sprinkled upon a little water on your head when you're an infant, or if you have been baptized three times forward, or if you have been baptized by immersion,

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doesn't make a whole lot of difference. Well, I don't think anything the Bible teaches should be taken in that attitude or with that attitude. The Bible teaches something we ought to believe it. If it commands something we ought to obey it. And the word of God is very clear on the subject, it seems to me. Now, of course some of my dear friends would say that the viewpoint seems clear to them that it's just the opposite, but they're not preaching this morning.

James T. Jeremiah:

First of all, let me say that baptism was commanded by Christ, four, five things I want you to see about this, commanded by Christ. In Matthew 28, 19 to 20. So well known by all of you, the great commission, "The Lord Jesus Christ, commanded his disciples to go and preach the gospel, disciple the world and then baptize those who believed." Now, the words, if he commanded the church to go, and preach, and baptize, and teach, then all of that is part of the Lord's command. Not an option. Not something we can look at and say, well, we don't need it in this age. We have a lot of people who get the Bible all twisted up so that they have nothing that applies to them with the exception of a few passages of scripture. But though the Bible may be written in a very real sense to many different groups. It all has a message for us and we can't avoid the responsibilities of it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Number two, baptism is taught in the epistles. You'll find that of course so clearly stated in the sixth chapter of the book of Romans where the apostle Paul said, "Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death. So the symbolic significance of baptism is seen here, like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Now there are other passages in the epistles that teach this, put it down in your mind this morning that not only did Christ command it, but the apostles taught it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Third place, baptism was practiced in the book of Acts. We just read one out of the second chapter. And there are many instances in the book of Acts where baptism is taught and where it's practiced, where it's obeyed. Number four, baptism in the Bible was observed by believers. Let me give you several references here. In Acts 8:12, it speaks of the Samaritans who believed and were baptized, both men and women. We read also in Acts 10:44 to 48, that believers in Cesarea heard the word and they followed the command to be baptized. At Philippi when Lydia came from Thyatira, heard the gospel, the word of God says, "The Lord opened her heart. She believed and was baptized." Acts 16:14 to 15, When the Philippian jailer were saved, he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and think of this, and the same hour of the night he was baptized.

James T. Jeremiah:

They didn't wait a long time when the jailer got saved. When he got saved, it was such an obvious reaction of the supernatural work that he didn't wait until the morning sun, he got baptized at night. Acts 16:31 to 33, and then in the word of God, it speaks also many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized. Now, when you read about baptism in the scriptures, it follows believing, never forget it. It doesn't precede it. It isn't a baptism on the believing. It is a baptism that follows believing. Now this eliminates a good many ideas if we take this seriously. First of all, it eliminates baptismal regeneration. All man, or great many people will preach a good message until they come to the end of it and they can't end it without telling you, you have to be baptized to be saved. That is not true.

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James T. Jeremiah:

A lot of folks think that that's the way you get to heaven by washing away your sin some way. No way could that happen. When believers were baptized, they were believers and saved people before they were baptized. It eliminates infant baptism, it's hard to understand how the little six week old baby could believe. They can cry, they can show that they're the sons or daughters of Adam. They can let you know what they want, but they don't know anything about believing. By the way, did you ever see the great gospel track or the great Bible track on what the Bible teaches about infant baptism, this great piece of literature, wonderfully prepared for the front cover. What the Bible teaches about infant baptism. When you open it up, there's nothing there. It tells quite a message. There isn't anything there about it. The idea that the Bible teaches believers baptism, it eliminates the doctrine of baptism for the dead.

James T. Jeremiah:

You would hardly believe it, but some of these dear people who believe in baptizing for the dead have been baptized for Julius Caesar and Napoléon Bonaparte, and a lot of other people that needed something besides baptism and especially after they were dead. It eliminates the idea of baptism after catechism. Baptism isn't a step on the educational road into the church. Baptism is an act of obedience following a believing in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Now baptism, in the fifth place is meaningful in its message. It is both commemorative and predictive. Baptism for a believer looks back to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and predictive in that it foreshadows in a very real sense the resurrection that the believer will have in the day that lies ahead. It signifies the believer's acceptance of the gospel. The gospel is outlined and defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 3, where the apostle Paul tells us that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that he was buried and he was raised again the third day, according to the scriptures.

James T. Jeremiah:

It signifies the identification of the believer with Christ in Roman 6:3, knowing you not that so many of us were baptized and that Jesus were baptized into his death. Now, whatever you take interpretation of this, whether this has to do with spirit baptism or water baptism, I think possibly we find both suggested in this passage, but literal water baptism is a type or a picture of a believers identification with Christ, and his death, and his burial, and his resurrection.

James T. Jeremiah:

Believer's baptism also signifies the death of the believer to the old life. Back in the days of the early church and many places today where there's opposition and persecution to believers when one would have the courage to be saved and follow Christ in obedience it meant actual separation from the family, separation from their society. In many days gone by and in some places, even now it costs something to be baptized because it means a severance of the old life, it ought to mean that now. Certainly inconsistent for a believer on any given Sunday morning or night to go into the waters of baptism and then the next week live as they did before they followed Christ, it signifies death to the old life.

James T. Jeremiah:

And then of course it signifies resurrection in the newness of life. Colossians one or Colossians 2:12 is very significant there I think. Now somebody said, well, how do you know that baptism should be in water? Let me point out that we don't get saved by it. Let me say it again. Baptists believe in much

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water, but they don't believe much in water. In fact, they don't believe at all in water. It's nothing to do with washing away sins. But a long time ago, especially through my ministry and connection with Dr. Arthur Williams, who was a long time professor of this school. And I knew him many, many years before he came here. I used to hear him preach on verse of scripture that has become a very interesting one to me. I never heard him say this, but I am positive that you read the verse in Matthew 3:15, that I want to leave with you in this particular point, that we can suggest that it has to be baptism in water without even talking about water.

James T. Jeremiah:

The Lord Jesus Christ baptism in Matthew 3:15, let me go back to verse 13. So you'll get the background of this. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." What is the Lord Jesus saying? Well, I believe he's saying that the fulfillment of righteousness is not going to be when John baptizes Jesus, a lot of people take this verse of scripture and apply it to their own baptism and when they do, they give the impression to people that it is part of their salvation. I recall several years ago on several occasions actually, being in a church in the state of New York, which no longer exists, I guess, as a Baptist church, but it was a great historical church.

James T. Jeremiah:

And over the baptistry was this phrase, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." That is not a good text to put over a baptistry, because we do not fulfill righteousness when we are baptized. Who did fulfill righteousness? The Lord Jesus Christ did. And when he was baptized, he was saying in this verse to us and everybody into all around them, permit it to be so now let's follow this out, he says. For in this same manner, thus, it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. When was that done? When he died on the cross, when he was buried in a tomb and when he came forth, victoriously from the grave, thus it becometh him. Thus it becometh the God-head to fulfill all righteousness. My friend, that's where it was all done. Aren't you glad? The Lord Jesus Christ paid the price. Was buried into a tomb, came forth victoriously from the grave.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now you may be here in this college this morning as a believer, and you've never been obedient to Christ in baptism. You ought to be. Say, well, I'm not a Baptist. I didn't say you had to be a Baptist to be baptized. You read the Bible a while you come along the right direction, but you go home for Christmas. Some of you have been fighting this matter or neglecting this matter of following Christ in baptism, or if you have been saved after you had some kind of a religious ordinance called baptism and it wasn't meaningful and you better see that the order is believe, and then be baptized, not be baptized and then believe. I remember a young lad in my home several years ago, who made a profession as a youngster. And when he was about 14, he came to me and he said, dad, I don't think I'm saved. I want to be sure about it. So I talked to him again, came away with assurance of his salvation.

James T. Jeremiah:

And the first thing he said to me, after he got saved, now I got to be baptized. And I thought I would see how well he'd listened in the Baptist preacher's home. Oh, I said, David, you were baptized once. I was not baptized. I wasn't saved when I was baptized. And I remember the day we baptized him, the water

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was ice cold. And on the way into the water, I said, you want to go back? He said, no way. So we baptized him first time. And if you have been saved since you were, whatever you did before you had that experience, you better think seriously about the order of scripture.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now the last word in Tulip Baptist five pointers is the word priesthood. And I have several books in my library and I decided to find out who wrote anything on priesthood, the priesthood of believers. After I got through looking at the books, I decided maybe I should re-investigate to see if this was really a Baptist distinctive or a Presbyterian distinctive or some kind of a distinctive, because few people have written on it. Good thing for you to study. What does it mean? Well, I suppose the best way to find out what it means is to read a portion of scripture and see what we can find out from the word of God. So let's go to Hebrews 4:14. Let's look at that for a minute. Hebrews 4:14 through 16 gives us a little insight into what the priesthood of the Saint really is.

James T. Jeremiah:

"Seeing then we have a great high priest", the Lord Jesus that is, "passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Now here's the application of all of this. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Now, this is one of many passages of scripture. There's another first Peter 2:5, "We're called in holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices." In revelation 1:6, "He's made us to be a kingdom of priests to serve his God and father." Romans 12:1 says, "Present your bodies, living, sacrificial, holy acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." What does it all mean?

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, that means that every child of God born of the holy spirit, redeemed by the blood of Christ has access to the very presence of almighty God. Now that's frightening, that's comforting, and it's challenging. Think of it. Anywhere we are, we may come to our father in heaven. Word of God, in that passage in Acts that we used as the basis for our studies this week talks about these people continuing in prayers. Word for prayer in that particular passage is used many times in the new Testament. You're a priest. A priest is one who has the opportunity of representing others before the father. Someone who said the highest form of prayer is intercession for others. And the most effective ministry is that which we exercise for someone else's benefit. The idea of intercession. Now you want to study this and many passages of scripture, being an encouragement to you.

James T. Jeremiah:

The priesthood of the believer means several things that I want to just quickly summarize some of the truths that come to us as believers, because we have this particular privilege. Number one, it says clearly that we have direct access to the throne of God. Think of it. We do not need to come through any man, whether he's ordained or not. We do not need to find our way to the throne of God through angels. And thank God we don't have to depend on the Saints. And there is no aid given in prayer by invoking the name of the Virgin Mary. Fact of the matter is before the day of Pentecost, the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus was with the disciples, praying with them. Not interceding in the sense that she is supposed to be doing today for them. Direct access to the throne of God. You don't have to wait. Don't have to be in

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a particular place. You don't have to have the lights of a certain kind or windows that shine with a sun and give you rays of hope as you'll see the beautiful colors.

James T. Jeremiah:

You don't have to have a beautiful organ that plays music that soothes your soul. You can come to God where, you are, some of you found it's important to have the priesthood of the believer when you're in class, just before that awful thing called a test. And then you say, Lord, give me understanding of that subject. And the Lord whispers back, too late. He doesn't say too late when we come the right way for the right motives. But if he's commanded us to do something and we try to pray our way around it, that doesn't work. Number two, this implies very strongly that we have the privilege of personal light on the scriptures. In other words, you have a Bible. The holy spirit lives in you. You have access to the throne of God and you can pray about the study of the word, and God can teach you from his word without having to depend on a lot of other ideas. Now don't misunderstand me. I am a great believer in commentaries, it's a great thrill to find something in the scripture and then read the commentary and find out the fellow was right after all.

James T. Jeremiah:

Another thing that's exciting about the commentary. You can read it and say he didn't have an answer either. The privilege of personal light, the word of God says the holy spirit teaches us, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. And when we have access to the throne of God, we can talk to God about the problems that we face in the study of the scriptures. Number three, this access to the throne of God in the priesthood, as we are believers in receiving, we can have a way open to know the will of the God. 1 John 5:14, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." We can come and pray, know the will of God as we read the scriptures and look to God in prayer. It's a practical doctrine and a wonderful truth. Number four, it means as we come individually to the throne of grace, we're not obligated to live by another's mandates.

James T. Jeremiah:

Word of God says many things about this. In Ephesians 5:6 it said, "Let no man deceive you." Good thing to remember. Colossians 2:18, it reminds us, "Let no man beguile you." One of the outstanding illustrations, I suppose of this would be Simon Peter in the day when he had the vision of heaven with all of the animals let down and there were some unclean animals in there. And Simon Peter was quite a legalist. He hadn't really got completely away from some of his background like the rest of us had the same problems. And God said, take and eat. And he said not so, Lord. He's not the only one who ever tried to say that. The most inharmonious statement in all the scriptures, not so, Lord, you can't do that. He's Lord. You can't say, not so, but Simon did.

James T. Jeremiah:

And finally, he got the message. A lot of people today you know that they're always looking at the net let down from heaven, your net. And they see some things in there you're going to eat and they say not so. Oh, you don't have to worry about that, if you know what God teaches. Now don't misunderstand this. I'm not talking about a liberty that leads to license. I'm not talking about a way of living that has nothing to do with standards and right truth from the scriptures. I'm talking about these characters on the outside or the inside, wherever they may be that are trying to enforce upon you their personal preferences. The priesthood of believers helps us to see that we're totally and completely responsible to

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God for what we do. We better get that straight because if we don't through life, it's going to be a terrible plague. When we have to be responsible for about 500.

James T. Jeremiah:

I remember one fellow wrote a letter, not sometime ago to a preacher said, I feel called of God to keep the GARB straight. What a tremendous responsibility. He probably did not live long enough. Now that doesn't mean we ought not to be concerned about anything that's wrong, but what some people call straight is what they define and put it in that straight line. And everybody has to march a believer, priest has a right to come to God through the scriptures and by the spirit and understand what God has for him. And he'll never lead us by the way into godlessness. You can't come that way and find a biblical warrant for disobedience. You don't come to the throne of grace as a priest and say, Lord, show me your will. And then say, I feel as though I had it, that's coming back to the thing that we don't want.

James T. Jeremiah:

The feeling kind of religion. Let me close by suggesting that the priesthood of believers makes us responsible, use the privilege in prayer for others. Prayers and intercessions be made for all men. We heard the other day at the prayer day, we're responsible to intercede, to pray for all men. F.E. Marsh, very wonderfully, briefly composed a list of people in the scriptures who were interceders. He said, Moses, the self [inaudible 00:29:11] was willing to be blotted out from the Lord's book so long as Israel was spared. Samuel, the faithful prophet pleaded for Israel and saw when they were in the [inaudible 00:29:24] because of their sin. Samuel prayed for them. Daniel, the humble servant pleaded for the nation of Judah, when in captivity and identified himself by saying that he was a member of the crowd that were sinners.

James T. Jeremiah:

[inaudible 00:29:41] the loving pleader interceded for the saints at Colossi, they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Paul, the intense suppliant pleaded for the church at Ephesus that they might have God's unparalleled riches. John, the loving disciple prayed for his friend Gaius that he might have soul prosperity, even as his soul prospered. Christ gracious Lord who prayed for Peter and that his faith might not fail. Intercessory prayer is the privilege of a Bible believing Christian. Now briefly in summary, the things I've been talking about are not just cold, bare bone doctrine. They are some of the practical teachings of the word of God.

James T. Jeremiah:

Truth of scripture. We have an inspired Bible. We must study it, know it, put it into practice. We are commanded in scripture to be unceasing in our evangelism, which means we must be concerned, burdened for lost souls at home and everywhere, and do something to reach them. The local church based upon new Testament teaching demands that we join one. Pray for our church, financially support it, find a church of his choice. Back after World War two, there was a great promotion deal for the church. And the great cry was go to the church of your choice. That's a stupid thing. You ought to go to the church of his choice. What kind of a church is it? Is it his church? Because it has the word church on the front of it, doesn't make it one. Immersion of believers means that every one of us must be obedient in baptism and the way, the only way that typifies his death, burial and resurrection. And priests must spend time interceding for others, for friends, or parents, or pastors, or missionaries.

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James T. Jeremiah:

Now some of you have said, I believe those things you've been preaching and I'm not a Baptist. Oh yes, you are friend. You just don't know it yet, because these are the great doctrines that make our body of believers different than a lot of the world. And I trust that as you think about them, you'll not only think about them from the standpoint of what you believe, but may the practicality of these great truths, we hold so dear, grip your heart, make you a different person when you think of what we have. People fought for what we have. I must tell you one, before I close, a man who paid a price, the early part of our country, there's a man whose name was Obadiah Holmes. Obadiah Holmes had a child that he would not permit the quote state unquote church to baptize.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now they just didn't ridicule, Obadiah. They just didn't point their finger at him. They put him in prison and in that prison was a man, John Clarke was there for the same reason. Someone came to the aid of Clarke paid his way out. But that old staller, the faith Obadiah said, I'm going to stay here. I believe the scriptures. If I have to suffer for them, I will. Finally, they gave up on him, I guess. They didn't want to let him go without doing something to him. So they took him out in the commons of Boston and beat him, beat his back. The story is that he looked up into the face of his persecutors and said with a smile on his face, "You have beaten me with roses." Young people, it's men like that, that make it possible in this country to have a school like this, and churches, and freedom like we have. They paid a price.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, let's not just take it lightly, but thank God for what they did and make your praise to the Lord for the privilege of enjoying the things in freedom, religiously speaking and otherwise that we have. Our father speak to our hearts today, challenge us not only to hear, but be obedient to the word of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Speaker 2:

Thank you. Dr. Jeremiah we're dismissed.